



# INDIAN TRAIL MARKER

SPRING 2022

News, events & calendar of the Indian Trail Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists...Serving Ellis and Navarro Counties



## The Peace of Wild Things

*When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be.  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

By Wendell Berry (Courtesy of Christine Cook)

## *From the Desk of the* **PRESIDENT**

### **Greetings Trailblazers!**

It is certainly an honor to be serving as your president! We have such a super group in our chapter. I appreciate how everyone steps up and pitches in to make things happen. Thank you especially to all who have taken on new positions and responsibilities this year. I look forward to seeing all our members at meetings and activities through the year.

In case you haven't noticed, we have many new things happening! At the board retreat in January, the board worked very hard to come up with new ideas to get everyone back involved after Covid. Our chapter theme for the year is "Let's renew in '22!" This is not meant to interfere in any way with the state mission statement or logo, but merely to give us a goal for the year.

As a result of this, we have updated the website and included a much-improved calendar. If you haven't looked yet, please do! There is a public calendar and one just for members in the "members only" area. (<https://txmn.org/indiantrail/>) If you need help with the website or new calendar, contact Lee Zollinger. Many of us are also communicating

using the Discord app. There you will find a page for everything...projects, committees, flora, fauna and just fun! You should have seen an email about how to access this to see what is there. If you need help getting on, contact Matthew Bacon.

Because of the new technology happenings, we have added a new item on the monthly agenda. It is called Tips and Tricks and is meant to help those of us not quite as tech savvy as some others.

As Spring approaches (soon, we hope), activities are amping up! Watch the calendar, Discord (<https://discord.com/invite/wypxDBENcW>) and emails for information about EXPO, wildflower walks, Blue Bonnet Trails, and Moth Night, along with more work/clean-up days and other project activities. We have so much going on that all should be able to find a place and time to come out and help. The monthly programs are all planned and so far, we have had superb speakers! Chapter meetings are still the 4th Monday of each month at 6:00 pm with the program at 7:00 PM. You can attend by Zoom if you can't come in person. Please invite your friends!

**Rena Sutphin**, *President, Indian Trail chapter*

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*"Act as if what you do makes a difference...it does"*

**William James**

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### **Indian Trail Master Naturalist Newsletter Team:**

- Debbie Pierce, Editor..... [debbiekpierce@att.net](mailto:debbiekpierce@att.net)
  - Thomas Hollingsworth, Editor..... [thomas@brookwaterwildlife.com](mailto:thomas@brookwaterwildlife.com)
  - Jim West, Design/Production..... [jrwest901@gmail.com](mailto:jrwest901@gmail.com)
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Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Monday (usually) of each month at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie. Our office is located in TexasAgrilife at 701 S. I-35E, Suite 3, Waxahachie, TX 75165 | 972-825-5175  
Visit our website at <http://txmn.org/indiantrail>

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**COVER: Great Blue Heron** Skimming across the Trinity River flood plain in the SE corner of Dallas Co., which is a great birding area for those of you who are so inclined. *JW*

# FEED THE BIRDS 2022

## Prep & Bullard Heights Park

By Laura Beattie

“To adapt, is to move ahead.” – Byron Pulsife

### Sunday, January 30th, 2022 – Prep Day

Who knew that in 2022 we’d still be concerned about a virus while planning this year’s Feed the Birds event! Thankfully, Erwin & Anna Ramos let us use their beautiful facility to host an outdoor bird treat prep day this year! We met on a beautiful Sunday afternoon and what a success it was! Over 20 Indian Trail Master Naturalist members came out to dip, drill, slather, and string treats for our feathered friends. Hundreds of



hanging treat basket when filled with a combination of seed and bark butter – and they’re reusable! Thanks to everyone who contributed their time and supplies and made this a great event!



pinecones and countless paper rolls were coated in variations of bark butter, peanut butter, suet, and bird seed, and dozens of cereal necklaces were strung for distribution the next week.

A new treat was created this year using lotus pods (thank you Lee Zollinger!), bark butter, string, and bird seed. The empty pods made a perfect



### Saturday, February 5th, 2022 – Feed the Birds (Bullard Heights Park)

A warmer Friday led to clear roads and, despite the ice storm two days earlier, Feed the Birds was a go! Regrettably, we didn’t have treats for water birds as we arrived at Kachina Prairie to find egrets, herons, and cormorants galore! Chris Cook and I toted the treats up the path; Chris went right, and I went left with hopes to meet up with treats to spare at the lake trail. Rena Sutphin joined us and we trudged around the prairie, leaving pinecones and treats in our wake! The avian chorus was putting on quite a concert that morning, providing a perfect musical backdrop to our efforts.

A blue jay carrying a peanut in its beak briefly landed in a tree overhead as if to say “thanks,” before flying off to enjoy the morsel. The chickadees were

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scolding us for taking too long (as we walked down the trails you could see them moving toward what we had just hung). Although chilly and a little icy in some shaded area, it was a beautiful day to feed the birds! Bullard Heights Park had a great turnout, lots of treats were hung and we even spied a few birds nibbling on them as we worked.



## ITMN Scholarship Awardee: Rachel Austin!



*By Jefferey Austin*

**Here is a first semester update from my daughter.**

“I am Rachel Austin and I received an ITMN college scholarship for the 2021-2022 school year. The scholarship funds helped me purchase textbooks and pay for miscellaneous school fees. I am majoring in Forestry with a concentration in Wildlife Management. I aspire to work at National Parks across the country as a Park Ranger educating the public and caring for our outdoor spaces. I’ve already taken several courses toward my major, with Introduction to Human Dimensions,

Introduction to Wildlife and Dendrology being especially interesting to me. By the end of my Dendrology course, I will be able to identify 148 East Texas trees. The American Sycamore tree is my favorite so far because of its unusual bark that peels off in plates to reveal a smooth white inner bark. I am actively involved in the National Association for Interpretation (NAI), Horticulture Club, and Silvans the Stephen F. Austin’s (SFA’s) Timber Sports Team. I have been volunteering with a university research team contracted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife. Thank you so much for your support and interest.”



Texas Blue Star

## LIBRIS OFFERINGS FROM THE ITMN LIBRARY

### “Lone Star Menagerie: Adventures with Texas Wildlife”

*By Jim Harris (Courtesy of Jennifer Zarate)*

This is a fun, light-hearted read by Jim Harris who is a native Texan and who writes about other types of native Texans. His stories are educational and entertaining. You will find humor and interesting facts within these pages. I highly recommend it!

# MEMBER P | R | O | F | I | L | E

## Madeline Kelley-Schwoch

*Indian Trail Master Naturalist*

*Interviewed by Debbie Pierce*

**W**hat activities do you enjoy when you're not busy with chapter programs?

I belong to three book clubs and read a lot. I also volunteer on City Boards such as Keep Duncanville Beautiful. I have volunteered with North Texas National Alliance on Mental Illness for the past 25 years. This organization offers free classes to help family members learn how to deal with someone who has a mental health diagnosis. I currently do monthly support groups with this organization. I want to learn how to play piano to help my old brain stay active! I have travelled all over the United States and a goal is to see the one state I have not seen, Alaska. I have also traveled all over Canada, Southeast Asia and Europe.

**H**ow did you become interested in Texas Master Naturalists?

My sister, who used to live in Duncanville, went to the first Master Naturalist class given in North Texas. I had always loved camping and being in nature and I wanted to learn more about what I was seeing when I camped. In 2011 I had left my corporate job and was working for my older son

in his business part time. I needed to focus on something other than mental illness and the care taking I was doing for my younger son who was a Gulf War Veteran so I took the class with the North Texas Master Naturalists.

**W**hat projects do you enjoy most?

I enjoy teaching others, like small children, about nature. I used to do monthly walks with preschoolers at 12 Hill Nature Center in Oak Cliff until the pandemic hit. I am hoping that we can do something like this at Mockingbird Park in the future. I also enjoyed doing the newsletter and managing the Monarch Tagging Project and will continue to participate in these projects. I like volunteering at events that promote awareness of our natural world. I am not very good at doing grounds maintenance any longer due to allergies and age. I also have a large yard and garden that takes my time.

**W**hat nature/environmental issues interest you the most or that you find the most rewarding?

There are so many things we do to destroy our natural world. Pesticides, pollution, carbon. Plastic and recycling are big issues for me. I want to ask everyone who walks out of the store with cases of water in plastic bottles if they have seen the plastic in the Pacific Ocean that is larger than the mass of the United States. When I used to take my boys to soccer games, we took one of those big water buckets and some paper cups for the kids. I wonder why we can't be more effective in getting mass transportation across our State....oh yes there is the oil industry! When in

Europe, it was so easy to get everywhere on mass transit.

Planting the right plants to feed our pollinators is another big one for me. Wise use of water, especially in Texas, is another issue for me.



Get out!



Male English Sparrow getting the bum's rush.

# MR. WEST'S NEIGHBORHOOD

By Jim West

SPARROWS! Really? Well, turns out that there are a lot more interesting sparrows out there than the pesky English\* imported variety that you see around your house and, all over your bird feeder. A bunch more. For the record, I am of the same school as the two female Red-winged Blackbirds above, chasing one off of my feeder.

*\*Ironically, English sparrows are becoming scarce in the UK due to loss of their normal habitat, hedgerows.*



Fox Sparrow (Red group)

White-throated Sparrow



White-crowned Sparrow



# "Stars and S'mores"



By Katie Christman, Photography by Joshua Fread

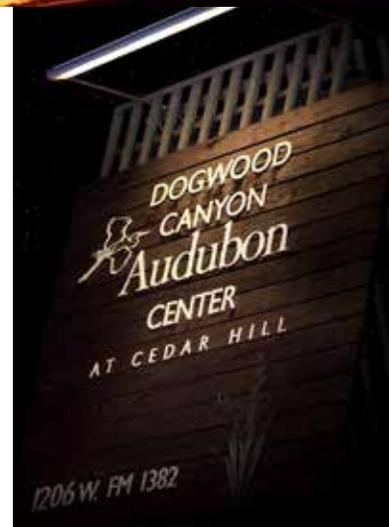
Chilly air, the eagerness of hiking in the woods at night and the smoky smell of wood and toasted marshmallows welcomed back the 100 plus visitors at Stars and S'mores in January at Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center.

A clear starry sky greeted guests as they ventured out, many for the first time since Covid, to explore the Center and what it had to offer. Members of the Dark Sky Association, happily explained the intricate details of how dark skies affect both wildlife and

humans. For many guests, looking through telescopes was a first-time experience. In the Dallas area, seeing stars is something that is a special experience. Telescopes allowed guests the opportunity to extend their vision beyond layers of clouds and haze.

As guests continued on their adventurous night, many braved walking on our trails at night with experienced guides. Focusing on using their senses, guests were encouraged to not use flashlights, with the moonlight as their guide along the twists and turns of the Balcones trail, Canyon Floor trail or West Loop Trail. We tested how well guests could see color at night, asking them to write their name with a crayon on a piece of paper (without using light). Guests were also intrigued by stories of dragon's teeth, learning about bioluminescence and how Wintergreen lifesavers produce a bright, blue spark. For many guests, not only was this their first time hiking on our

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trails, but it was their first experience hiking at night.

After coming off the trail and being greeted by our chatty Barred Owl, Mocha, guests could enjoy a beer from Ash & Ember Brewery or tacos from Mija BBQ. Many groups decided to meander to the fire, being serenaded by Matt Nestor music, snuggling next to the fire and enjoying their S'mores.

While you never know what the weather is going to do in January, we had the perfect night to view stars, hike and eat S'mores. What a way to start off 2022 and to greet our guests back to the Center! We want to thank all of ITMN for their support in helping us with this spectacular event.



Book Review by Charlie Grindstaff

## The Incredible Journey of Plants

By Stefano Mancuso

translation by Gregory Conti

2018 – Other Press

“We know very little about plants, and, quite often, the little we think we know is wrong. We are convinced that plants are not able to perceive the environment around them, while in reality, quite to the contrary, they are more sensitive than animals. We are sure that plants belong to a silent world, deprived of the ability to communicate, but, instead, plants are great communicators. We are convinced that they don't carry on any kind of social relationship, but, quite the opposite, they are exquisitely social organisms. We are, above all, absolutely certain that plants are immobile. On this point, we are immovable. Plants do not move; after all, just look at them. Isn't the big difference between animal and vegetable organisms exactly that?”

WRONG! Plants move a lot, only at a slower pace. They are not unable to move; they are unable to locomote, at least not in the course of their lifetime.

“We will never be able to understand plants if we look at them as if they were impaired animals. They are a form of life that is different, neither simpler nor less developed, than the animal form of life.”

I wish I could just put quotation marks around all 147 pages of this book, but then it would be a book, not a book review. Bummer! This is a really interesting book with wonderful stories about how plants got from point A to points B, C...X, Y, and Z. Points A and B sometimes being on opposite sides of the continent, ocean, or even the world.

There is no terrestrial environment in which plants capable of photosynthesis are not able to take root and once you have plants other life forms will follow. I especially liked the description of plants having the capacity to cover in a very short time all kinds of terrain, by conquering or reconquering them for nature. Nature abhors a vacuum and a bare piece of ground.

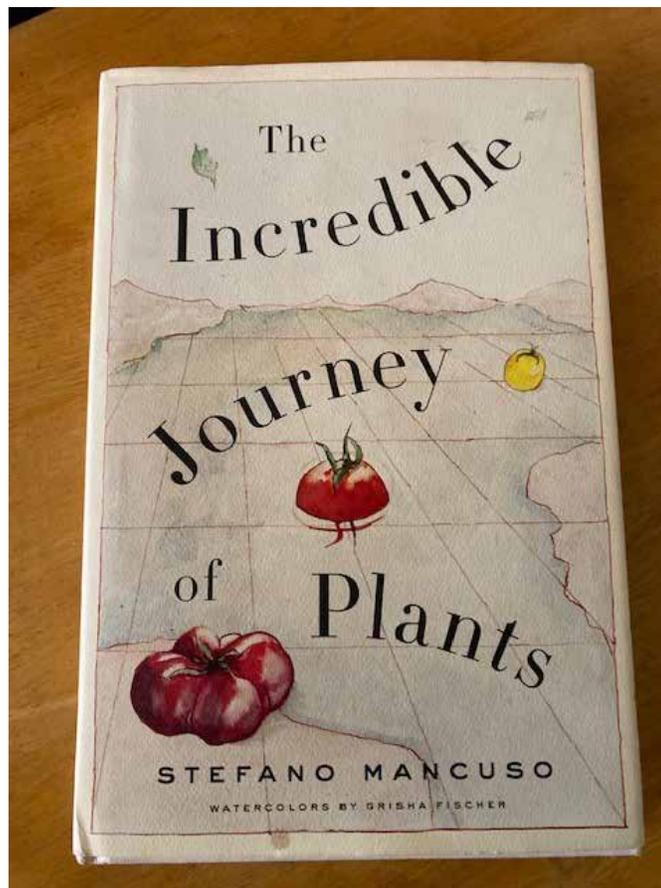
The author describes a series of volcanic eruptions from 1963-67 about 60 miles south of Iceland which created a 29,000 square foot island, dubbed Surtsey, for Surtr, the Norse fire giant. It was declared a nature reserve and only a handful of scientists were allowed access to it. *Cakile arctica* (Arctic sea rocket) was the first plant found growing there in 1965. This discovery

is not too surprising because their seeds float and can remain viable for years. The first tree took root on the island in 1998 and in 2008 (45 years after the first eruption), scientists identified 69 species of plants growing there: 9% transported by wind, 27% by sea, and 64% by birds. None planted by man.

Mancuso discusses Chernobyl. The exclusion of human activity has created an involuntary nature reserve. This still-inaccessible space for people has become one of the most biologically diverse territories in the former Soviet Union. “It seems that humans are much more harmful than

radiation.” Both plants and animals have returned in superior numbers and varieties, in spite of the radiation.

We know that man has transported many plants from point A to point Home, like corn from Mexico or tomatoes from Peru. Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) was brought from India by Alexander the Great in 350 BCE, but for 2000 years it was held responsible for states of torpor and madness, until Nicholas Culpeper, the British physician and botanist, deemed it not only aromatic but also good to eat.



book review continued

There is a wonderful story about Charles Darwin, thinking seeds must have the capacity to survive in saltwater for long periods of time to explain how they came to be on islands....so he experimented by putting seeds in bottles of saltwater and over periods of time extracting a few and planting them...after a few days most of the seeds germinated just fine, but after longer periods in the saltwater the cabbage, broccoli and onion seeds produced really offensive odors. One of his botanist friends pointed out the flaw in Darwin's thinking...his seeds didn't float so they wouldn't have made it across the ocean to the islands anyway.

Campbell Island, with a surface area about the size of Nantucket, is located 375 miles south of New Zealand in the Subantarctic. Discovered in 1810, the island was completely uninhabited then as it is now. Duh! The sun shines only one hour a day for 7 months of the year, the average temperature is 47° F, it rains

constantly, and the wind is stronger than 60 mph for over 100 days each year. The vegetation there is mosses, lichens, grasses, a few shrubs and only one solitary tree, a Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), "the loneliest tree in the world". You will have to read the book to find out how it got there.

Mancuso has a great theory why Osage Orange (*Maclura pomifera*) survived after finding itself in trouble when the mastodons and mammoths disappeared. If barbed wire had been invented 50 years earlier, the Osage Orange may not have survived. And who saved avocados from extinction? You guessed it – jaguars.

According to the author, "the invasive plants of today are the native flora of the future, just as the invasive species of the past are a fundamental part of our ecosystem today." And after reading this wonderful book, I have to agree.

# MAYOR'S WINTER WALK



By Charlie Gindstaff

They couldn't have picked a much nicer day for the Mayor's Winter Walk at Mockingbird Nature Park this year. Saturday, Feb. 19 was sunny and just chilly enough that the stocking caps the Midlothian Parks and Recreation Department handed out felt really good. Of course, the fruit, energy bars, bags and all the fabulous "outdoor" prizes they provided were appreciated too. Attendees numbered 82 and about a third were children. They all seemed to figure out pretty quickly that "Trees are the answer" to everything or at least to our questions: What are the oldest living things, the tallest living things and the heaviest living things on earth? Indian Trail was very well represented, not just in numbers, for I received several comments on how friendly and knowledgeable our members are. I had the privilege of walking with Mayor Reno and in keeping with our tree theme was able to identify several for him and the other walkers.





## BIG CEDAR WILDERNESS TRAILS

*By Lori Crider*

The Indian Trail Master Naturalist (ITMN) Chapter's newest project is Big Cedar Wilderness Trails, located on the highest part of the escarpment overlooking Joe Pool Lake. It's a hidden gem with more than 16 miles of trails about a mile from Cedar Ridge Preserve. It features amazing sunsets overlooking the lake, awesome wildlife, a hidden waterfall and much more! Most of the trail land is owned by Mountain Creek Community Church and maintained by DORBA (Dallas Off Road Bicycle Association) and the church but our help is needed. We can assist with removing invasive species, trash cleanup, guided hikes and light trimming. We could also provide a trail map and signage.

Susan Vlach is the Project Chair for Big Cedar Wilderness and has put in countless hours in trash removal. Susan and Lori Crider represented ITMN and connected with another member of the community, the church, and DORBA for a major cleanup project on the Emerald Creek Loop in February. A trail cleanup day will be planned for March for ITMN to pick up trash on the Dragonfly Loop which seems appropriate for Master Naturalists!

On February 27, ITMN members and guests from the hiking community met at Big Cedar for a guided hike to the Hidden Waterfall and a good time was had by all! We had more than 15 in attendance plus a happy dog. We look forward to more of these hikes in the future.

For more information on areas that need trash removal, contact Susan Vlach or for hiking/trail information, contact Lori Crider. Please check out this wonderful new project!



### Big Cedar Wilderness Trails

#### Location

- 8991-8999 Isom Road, Dallas – Entrance for hike and bike
- Park next to the Pavilion – Restrooms and showers available to the public
- **Hours of Operation:**
- Open until Sunset, closed Mondays
- Opens at 1:00PM Sundays  
(AM hours reserved for church activities)

**MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM MISSION:** To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

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## INDIAN TRAIL CHAPTER MASTER NATURALISTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Rena Sutphin.....renasutphin@yahoo.com

Vice-President/Programs: Jessica Willis .....jmwillistx@gmail.com

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Secretary: Jennifer Zarate .....jen\_zarate@att.net

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**For additional information about the Indian Trail Master Naturalist Chapter please visit:**

- For the Public:
  - Becoming a Master Naturalist:  
<https://txmn.org/indiantrail/about/become-a-master-naturalist/>
  - General Inquiries: <https://txmn.org/indiantrail/contact-us-2/>
  - For ITMN Members Only:
  - Committee Contacts: <https://txmn.org/indiantrail/board-and-committees/>
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**Aaaand, they’re back. Ibises stopping by on their return from winter migration.**

